

ORGANIC CERTIFICATION FACT SHEET

The organic integrity of your farm starts with your seeds, seedlings, and planting stock. Both annual and perennial crop producers must source products that are compliant with the organic regulations.

USDA organic regulations require the use of organically grown seeds, annual seedlings, and planting stock. **7CFR §205.204**

Seeds and planting stock practice standard

- Organic seeds must be used unless a seed is not commercially available in an organic form. This requirement includes cover crops and forages. Sprouts must be produced with organic seed.
- Organic annual seedlings must be used to produce an organic crop. Temporary variances to this requirement may be granted in the event of a natural disaster.
- Organic planting stock must be used unless the planting stock is not commercially available in an organic form.
- Organically produced crops from non-organic seeds or planting stock may be sold with an organic claim. However, planting stock may not be represented as organic until 1 full year of organic management.
- Treatments used to prepare a seed or planting stock for planting are only permitted if all ingredients comply with the USDA organic regulation. Non-compliant treatments are considered a prohibited material.

The search for organic seeds and planting stock

1

Contact three or more suppliers. Sources should include companies that offer organic seeds and planting stock.

2

If the supplier does not have the appropriate form, quality or quantity you require, document your attempt and the reason the organic seed or planting stock is not being used.

3

After an unsuccessful search of at least three sources, non-organic seed/planting stock may be used, provided it is not treated with a prohibited material and not genetically engineered.

4

Maintain records of search efforts and compliance of seeds, seed treatments, seedlings, and planting stock.

Reasons for choosing a non-organic seed or planting stock

- The needed form or variety is unavailable. For example, your farm may require seeds with specific disease resistance that is not available organically.
- The organic variety's quality is unacceptable.
- The seed or planting stock is not available in sufficient quantity.

Cost is not a valid justification for the use of non-organic seed or planting stock.

For the production of edible sprouts, there is no exception to the requirements to use organic seed.

Inputs used for treatment of seeds or planting stock

Treatments used to prepare a seed or planting stock for planting are only permitted if all ingredients comply with the USDA organic regulation. Treatments that must be evaluated for compliance include:

- Inoculants: The materials used in *Rhizobium* or other microbial preparations cannot be genetically modified.
- Pelleting: Ingredients used in pelleting must be non-synthetic or included on the National List at § 205.601 for an appropriate use.
- Fungicides, herbicides and insecticides used as seed treatments must be compliant for organic production, including inert and active ingredients. Botanical or biological preparations cannot be genetically modified.

Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs)

GMOs are not allowed in organic production per §205.105 of the USDA organic regulations. See the USDA's list of "Determinations of Nonregulated Status" for a complete list of GMO crops that may be commercially available in the US.

http://www.aphis.usda.gov/biotechnology/petitions_table_pending.shtml

Recordkeeping

Your records must verify that all seeds, annual seedlings, and planting stock comply with the USDA organic regulations. The following records should be kept and made available at inspections:

- Seed invoices, packages, and organic certificates from the supplier of the seeds and transplants
- Documentation verifying attempts to obtain organic seeds or perennial planting stock
- Disclosure of all ingredients in seed coatings and inoculants
- Verification that inoculants have not been produced with GMOs
- Verification that non-organic seeds and planting stock have not been treated with prohibited materials and have not been genetically modified (for crops also available in a GMO form)

Terms Defined

Annual seedling. A plant grown from seed that will complete its life cycle or produce a harvestable yield within the same crop year or season in which it was planted.

Commercial availability. The ability to obtain a production input in an appropriate form, quality, or quantity to fulfill an essential function in a system of organic production or handling, as determined by the certifying agent in the course of reviewing the organic plan.

Planting stock. Any plant or plant tissue other than annual seedlings but including rhizomes, shoots, leaf or stem cuttings, roots, or tubers, used in plant production or propagation.

Additional Resources

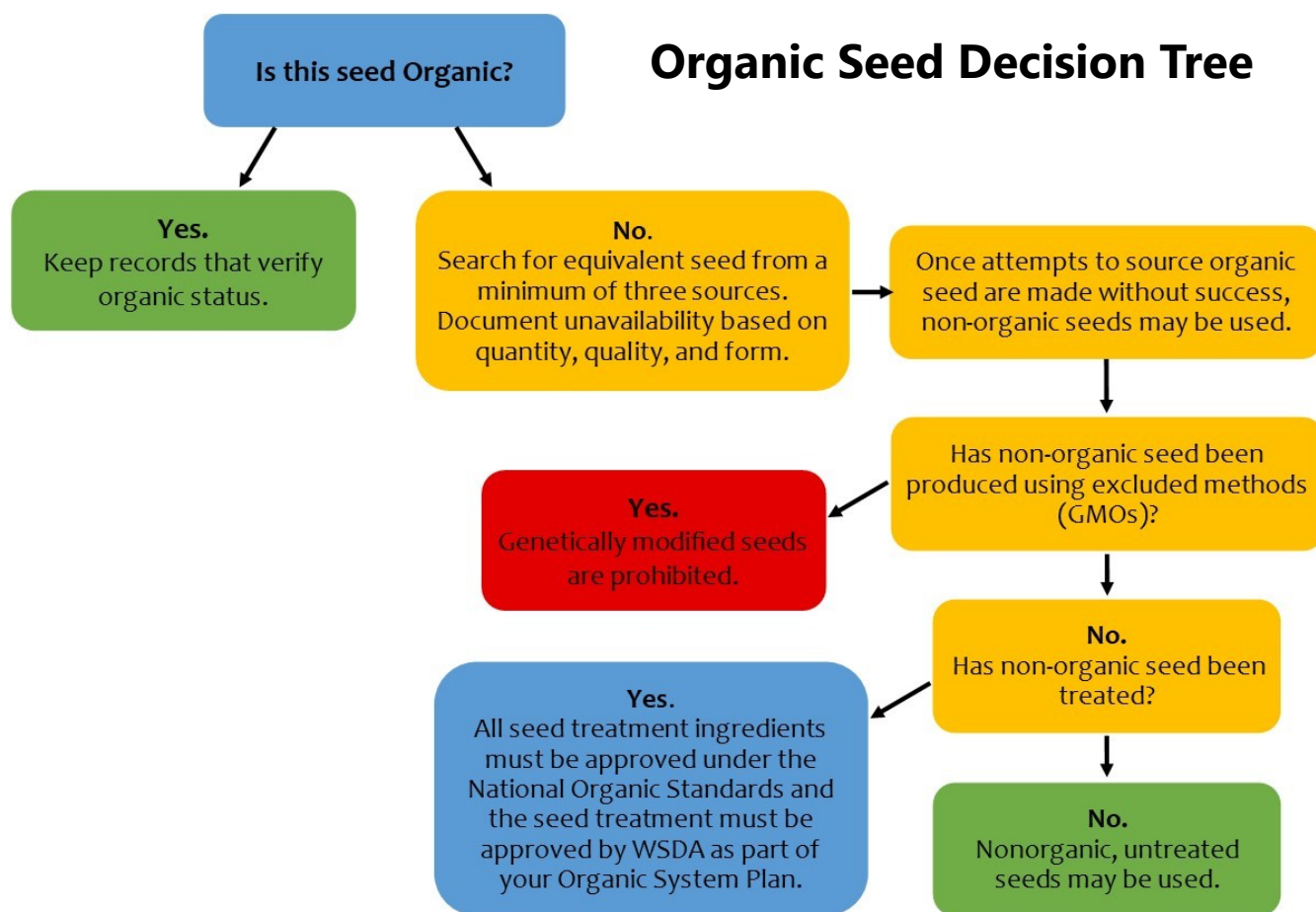
NOP Guidance 5029: Seeds, Annual Seedlings, and Planting Stock in Organic Crop Production

<https://www.ams.usda.gov/sites/default/files/media/5029.pdf>

AOSCA Organic Seed Finder www.organicseedfinder.org

Organic Seed Alliance www.seedalliance.org

ATTRA Seed Supplier Search http://attra.ncat.org/attra-pub/organic_seed/



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